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SUBJECT: Agrarian Editorial on Shift in Social Democratic Attitude toward Soviet Union

There is attached a translation of an editorial which appeared in "Maakansa" for August 28, 1954. It will be noted that this editorial constitutes an amused and ironical acknowledgment of a seeming change in the attitude of leading Social Democrats, particularly Messrs. Fagerholm and Leskinen, with respect to the so-called "Kekkonen line" in Finnish foreign policy. The editorial even suggests that these two gentlemen have been almost unpatriotically effusive in their statements on the basis of their recent trips to the Soviet Union. The observations made in the editorial are not without pertinence, although it is questionable whether one may suppose that there has been any change in the opposition to Communism which have characterized Messrs. Fagerholm and Leskinen for many years.

Local observers consider it certain that the editorial was written by Prime Minister Kekkonen himself. It is interesting to note that the writer, whoever he may be, trusts that the new Social Democratic attitude which he purports to discern may prove to be a factor in the elimination of the rift between the Social Democrats and the Agrarians in internal policy. It is known from other sources that Prime Minister Kekkonen is concerned with the desirability of enhanced Cabinet collaboration between Agrarians and Social Democrats.

For the Minister:

H. Bartlett Wells

H. Bartlett Wells
 First Secretary of Legation

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Enclosure:

Translation, "Maakansa",
 August 28, 1954.

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From _____

UNCLASSIFIED

(Classification)

Page 11 of
Encl. No. 1
Desp. No. 95
From Helsinki

TRANSLATION

("Maakansa", August 28, 1954)

Favorable Signs

Generally speaking, no division of opinion has been manifested with respect to the appropriateness of the foreign policy line followed officially by this country, and the course of developments has shown that the foreign policy thus practiced has been in accord with the nation's interests. From time to time, however, attention has been aroused both at home and beyond our frontiers by the attitude which certain representatives of one of our great parties have manifested in statements and interviews issued by them, particularly during the course of visits to countries of the West. It has been asked with some surprise whether such attitudes reflect Finland's outlook and whether they tend to consolidate the country's international position.

Against this background one finds certain most recent phenomena to be worthy of notice. The thoughtful and restrained position assumed by the Social Democratic press with respect to recent events in the field of foreign policy, and the subsequent foreign policy statements by Speaker Fagerholm and Interior Minister Leskinen, have left the impression that in that particular quarter there is in process of emergence an attitude toward our nation's vital problems which is more carefully considered than has previously been the case. Indeed, some commentators have smilingly wondered, on the basis of a number of rather un-Finnish sounding effusions, at the suddenness of the conversion, but there can be a number of opinions regarding such matters of style as this without the substance of the matter being changed.

For our part we believe that there is involved here a seriously undertaken review of the situation which has led certain prominent figures in the Social Democratic Party, who will hardly prove to be alone within their organization, to conclusions which are in a certain measure new. Even an outsider is justified in regarding this development with satisfaction. We believe that it is calculated to help also in the elimination of those rifts in internal policy which have appeared from time to time as a consequence of the fact that attempts have been made to exploit the foreign policy positions of the nation's official leadership as a weapon in domestic policy debates. This re-examination of the general attitude can hardly fail to redound to the benefit of all those who strive toward what is best for this country. For this reason it is to be hoped that the revision will prove permanent.

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